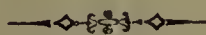


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Is the Kafir population in Natal Alien
So. Afr. or Aboriginal?

A Brief Inquiry.



BY JOHN BIRD,

LATE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE,

AND COMPILER OF THE ANNALS OF NATAL.



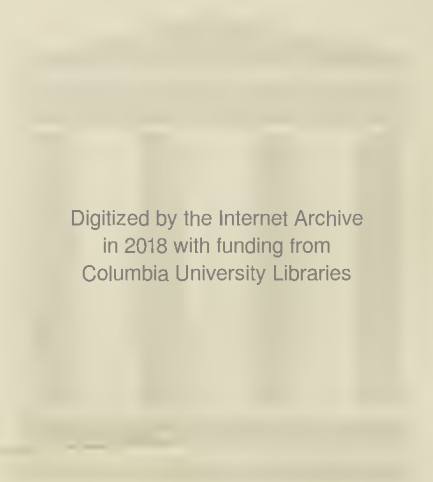
CITY PRINTING OFFICE PIETERMARITZBURG :

1890.

by R. G. Wilson
mailed at Louisville, Ky.
Rec'd March 22/90

Dr. Lewis Hunt
Flattboro

M. - N. S. C.



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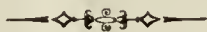
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The Natives of Natal.



The earliest information regarding the natives of this country is derived from the narratives of voyagers of the 16th century. Nearly a hundred years later—1684-1690—the Dutch Governors at the Cape of Good Hope caused to be carefully and officially recorded the statements of mariners wrecked on the coast of Natal, some of whom had lived there more than three years. From these sources it is known with certainty that for very many generations before the commencement of the present century the population of the country was numerous, peaceable, and rich in cattle. Captain Hamilton (*East Indies*, vol. 1, p. 9, A.D. 1683), speaks of the natives of Natal as “having showed shipwrecked men more civility and humanity than some nations that I know who pretend much religion and politeness; for they accommodated their guests with whatever they wanted of the product of the country at very easy rates, and assisted what they could to save part of their damaged cargo, receiving very moderate rewards for their labour and pains.”

For purposes of trade or sport a few adventurers made their way to Natal—1822-1824. It was then apparently void of inhabitants. The strangers were not slow in learning the causes that had made the land a desert. The leading events in a period of aggression, bloodshed and cruelty thus became known not long after their occurrence; but the circumstances attending the dispersion or expulsion of those who had escaped from defeat and massacre were not ascertained in great detail, until, by direction of Lieutenant-Governor Scott—1863-4—the evidence was recorded of native chiefs and others who had grown up in the country before its devastation by Tshaka.

In the year 1800 Tshaka was a boy not more than thirteen years old. It is little likely that he can have gained enough of influence and of the power of control needed for his great military enterprises before he attained the age of twenty-five or thirty years; but it is scarcely important, in so far as regards Natal, to fix the precise date of any of his campaigns, since it is quite certain that before 1824, far the greater part of the population had disappeared. Those who still remained in it lurked in woods or thickets or in the rugged and scarcely accessible recesses of hilly tracts, or of the western mountains. Tshaka had slain unnumbered thousands. Many had fled to the south and west. The submission of many more was, however, accepted by the Zulu chief on condition of their being incorporated in the multitude under his sway. The Zulus had not originally, as a separate tribe, numbered more than twenty or thirty thousand souls. From the very many tribes conquered in rapid succession, which had, each under its own chief, occupied the extent now known as Zululand and Natal, about half-a-million in little more than fifteen years were added to the Zulus. The aggregate host were then spoken of as the Zulu nation; and the region inhabited by them received the name of Zululand. Tshaka forbade the occupation of the country between the Itongati and the Umzimvubu; and scarcely a straggling native was to be seen in the whole extent now known as Natal.

Great were the sufferings of those who refused to submit to the conqueror. In the resolute efforts to resist invasion, bravery and a warlike spirit were fostered and stimulated in them. The invader was not at first in every instance the Zulu. Other tribes flying southward from Tshaka intruded on the tracts occupied by those whom he had not yet molested. Disorder necessarily followed. Quarrels, robberies, and murderous violence became matters of daily occurrence, and tribal feuds and distrust were engendered and took deep root.* But whether as in some cases the natives were

* The estrangement resulting from these causes is not extinct at the present day, and shows itself occasionally, though not frequently, in "faction fights" that call for repression by legal process. Such partial disturbances do not affect the general tranquillity. There can even be little doubt that the spirit of feud has been, and is, a powerful safeguard against any combination of the native tribes in disobedience or resistance to lawful authority.

driven out at once by other tribes that shared the common calamity; or whether, after withstanding minor force, they gave way before the power of the mightier assailant, their lot was equally that of the conquered. Safety could only be found in concealment or flight to a distance. Few were able to retain their cattle, the wealth and only certain means of subsistence of a pastoral people. Many privations, exposure, hunger, danger, made their existence miserable; in some instances so wretched and necessitous that men killed and ate their fellow men.

If, within a few years after the savage invasion, so improbable an event had occurred as that the tyrant, dying, had been succeeded by some ruler of placable and just character; if, in fact, by any freak of fortune it had become possible for the natives to return and again to occupy the country in peace, as they had done for ages before, it may be regarded as certain that every one not devoid of the ordinary feelings of humanity, and who knew the dreadful calamities to which they had been subjected, would have rejoiced at their restoration to the land which nature had assigned to them. But no such propitious chance was in store. Before the exiles could return, or be seen in the land with safety, other claims to the soil, and other interests had arisen, and made it impossible that they should ever again be its sole owners. This was not due to the presence in the country of the few Englishmen before referred to—of whom indeed one or two obtained the cession of large extents of territory from the Zulu chieftain, but they were never occupied, and the grants were ultimately disallowed and set aside as of no validity. The rest of the adventurers coveted no possession of land except holdings at or near the port. A small number of natives, with the consent of Dingaan, attached themselves to the English. Others who came without his sanction were sent back to him, and were put to death. Refugees, however, continued to flock towards D'Urban; the displeasure of Dingaan was excited, and he sent a force to destroy them. The traders and their native adherents fled to the south. Some returned in 1835, still limiting their occupation to the neighbourhood of D'Urban.

But, soon after, Natal was claimed and occupied by emigrants from the Cape Colony. The ancestors of these

emigrants, ill-used and uncared for by the first Dutch governors, had at the end of the 17th century withdrawn from the neighbourhood of Cape Town; and in proportion as the Government from time to time adopted measures for extending its influence and exerting authority over them, the greater number—only those being left behind, here and there, who were of a more submissive or less nomadic disposition—retired farther and farther into the interior, until the Orange River and the borders of Kaffraria set a limit to their wanderings. Their constant change of abode had been inconsistent with agriculture or steady industry, and they became almost of necessity a pastoral people. Shortly before the year 1800, at first for a few years only, but permanently after 1806, the Cape became one of the British possessions; and then to the dislike, engendered by injustice, of being subject to control, and the keen desire of being a law to themselves, was superadded the aversion to a Government by rulers not of their own nationality. They suffered losses from their proximity to the Kafirs, and felt acutely aggrieved that the British governors did not give them the measure of redress which they regarded as their due. In 1835-1836 they resolved to cross the Orange River, and withdraw to some remote locality. Their exodus at that time has been commonly spoken of as the "Boer emigration," but as has been justly remarked by one of their countrymen, a judge of some eminence on the Cape bench, at any stage of their advance in the wilds of the Cape Colony, "they were already 'emigrant Boers,' for the emigration began—not in 1837, as is idly asserted for political reasons—but before the commencement of 1700."* When first the project was formed of going beyond the Orange River, a few men of influence among them visited Natal, and, finding it to all appearances uninhabited, were impressed with the belief that it was specially fitted for the purpose of a settlement remote from British control or interference. Their report greatly quickened the desire for emigration. Early in 1838, the Boers crossed over the mountain range of the Kwahlamba or Draaksberg.

* Selections from the writings of the late Judge E. B. Watermeyer. Cape Town : J. C. Juta. 1877.

There can be but a cursory allusion here to the perfidy of Tshaka's successor with whom they bargained for the possession of Natal, to the treacherous massacre of their emissary and his companions, and subsequently of nearly six hundred men, women, and children in their encampment near the base of the mountains, or to their subsequent complete success in the overthrow of Dingaan. It had been no concern of theirs to enquire whether the Zulu chief, with whom they had wished to treat peaceably and amicably for the cession of the territory, had the right as well as the power to comply with their desire. Tshaka's whole career had been one of unbridled lawlessness and savage cruelty. Dingaan, who became the Zulu King or Chief by the assassination of his brother, had even less of any equitable claim to deal with the vacant region. But the Boers were masters of the country, and had not, and could not have had, any misgivings as to the justice of their claim to be so, and to act as they pleased in regard to its occupation; and they lost no time in assigning large tracts, in most instances 7,000 or 8,000 acres in extent, to nearly every full-grown emigrant. Yet it must often afterwards have been present to their thoughts that if might could confer right, then the English in 1842 had even more of an unquestionable prerogative to prescribe the terms upon which they would permit the country to be inhabited; for in compelling the Boers, whom they could not but regard as their own subjects, to submit to their authority, the British Government had acted, not from any desire to acquire new territory, but from a well-grounded apprehension that the interference of the emigrants with the Kafir races south of Natal might endanger the safety of the eastern frontier of the Cape. The safeguard against this risk having been secured, the Crown was at once in a position to act humanely and liberally in every measure affecting the welfare of the occupants of the territory. No sooner had the Boers made their submission than we find in many a despatch a considerate admission of the fact that the elder men among the emigrants had not been born British subjects, that they had suffered severe hardships in their wanderings, and had borne with no ordinary fortitude the reverses brought upon them by the guile and ferocity

of Dingaan. The object was steadily held in view to conciliate them by every equitable concession to their desire of settling in the country. For the more effectual attainment of this large-hearted purpose, the Commissioner chosen to initiate the arrangements that were to pave the way to a regular government was a Cape colonist,* who had it at heart to carry out his mission by winning over his countrymen to a cheerful recognition of the paramount authority of Great Britain; and in striving for this he very naturally inclined to the vindication of every claim advanced by them consistently with such allegiance.

But the Ministry in England did not for a moment lose sight of the fact that there were natives in the country who had at least an equal claim on their care and generosity: that these natives, in the primitive condition of an utterly uncivilized people, would be little likely to assert, or even to understand their own rights; and that it behoved a ruling power to be watchful in guarding their interests. An instruction to the Commissioner, 18th May, 1843, required that "in reporting upon the claims of applicants within that territory he must carefully ascertain that the land so claimed is not also claimed, or held, or occupied by any native chief or native people, and when such a claim shall be made, he will take care specially to report all the grounds advanced by conflicting claimants, whether European or other, in order that Her Majesty's Government may decide between them." On 11th October, 1843, an instruction followed in terms of which he was "to make it known to the emigrant farmers and native tribes that he had been directed in May last to cause the claims of the natives to lands which they either held or occupied to be scrupulously respected:" and at the same time to make it known "that Her Majesty's and the Colonial Government will spare no pains to secure protection and justice to the native tribes around Natal; and that they are not to be restricted in locating themselves to any particular spot or district, nor are they to be excluded from occupying any land whatever which remains at the disposal of the Crown. The Government will neither

* Mr. H. Cloete, afterwards Recorder of Natal.

disturb them, nor allow them to be disturbed in their occupation or selections. You will be good enough to announce that you never had any authority for even inquiring into their wishes or pretensions in those respects, and that it is not in any way within your province or duty to make any permanent or temporary arrangement either with the emigrants or with the natives for the settlement of the latter people. It is not probable that the natives will apply to the Government for grants of the lands they now hold or may hereafter occupy. The advantage of such titles will not occur to their ignorant minds; but if they should, or if the Government should consider that the issue of them will afford greater enjoyment and protection to the native in his possession, they will undoubtedly receive them precisely as would the farmers or any other persons."

To this intervention on the part of the Home Government it has been due that the natives have been able to live and, for the greater part, to live contentedly, within the limits of Natal. A few years elapsed after the date of the instructions to the Commissioner, and then locations were assigned for their use; and those to whom they were allotted have been in a position of greater advantage than their fellows who returned at a later period. The area of the locations is about a sixth of the whole colony; and as much the larger portion of the extent is rocky, broken, and barren, it could not suffice for a pastoral population now, probably, nearly equal to that which Tshaka expelled or destroyed. The Kafirs, therefore, who have come at a later period, could not all find disposable space in the locations. They either took up their abode ("squatted") on vacant Crown lands, or, as in the case of very many, have lived on lands owned by Europeans: and in this tenure they have necessarily paid rents, very moderate at first, but gradually and greatly increased and increasing.* For more than forty years, therefore, though not all on terms of equal advantage, the natives have lived peaceably within our limits; and it has especially been a boon to them that until recently they have had

* In 1860 the rent almost uniformly charged to the natives was 5s. per hut. A return of the Land and Colonization Company's rents for 1836 shews an average charge of 28s. per hut.

little suspicion of the extent to which their presence has been a cause, sometimes of anxiety, more often of jealousy and dislike, to many of the European colonists; and that these influences have at times suggested their extrusion from the colony, and have even up to the present hour stood in the way of any such allotment of the locations as can be regarded as irrevocable. The thread that keeps their lot in suspense becomes more frail in proportion as a change in the government of the colony is drawing more near by advances slow indeed but apparently sure.

This hasty glance at the present position of the coloured race will not be without a retrospective utility in considering events in the past that have a bearing on their interests.

No sooner had the views of the British Ministry become known in 1843 than it was felt as a hardship by the emigrant Boers that the savage should, even in a limited extent, interfere with their possession of the land. Had they not sought to gain it by fair dealing with the Zulu King? Had it not cost the lives of very many of their kin murdered by treacherous Zulus? Nor did they only grudge the effect upon their interests; fear also had a share, perhaps not a little share, in their aversion to any measure permitting, and therefore encouraging, the savages to seek a home in Natal. They knew nothing except in bare outline of the history of the devastation by Tshaka. They had heard of a handful of Kafirs, not more than three thousand in all, who had gathered round the first adventurers at, or in the neighbourhood of the port: three thousand became an accepted number. The only aboriginal natives in whose favour some claim to a share in the soil might be admitted, must be those known to have been here in 1838, and were to be reckoned at three thousand. All other Kafirs were intruders, Zulus, men whom every emigrant might well distrust or fear. Zulu became the traditional appellation of the black man; he has, speaking generally, scarcely been known by any other; and it is one that has long fostered prejudice, and certainly has not favoured any recognition of his right to the locations.


But if in any reckoning of the natives entitled to be regarded as "aboriginal," and thus having some special claim to consideration, it was natural that motives of anxiety

should tend to restrict rather than to multiply the number, the circumstance must also be considered that any enumeration or even estimate of the Kafirs in 1838 was beset with difficulty to the Boers. The massacre at Blaauwkrantz had occurred in February; they could not have had any feeling of security until, at the close of the year, Dingaan had been defeated. They had but just entered a new region. Along the coast dense thickets grew in a belt from 12 to 15 miles broad, and in other parts there was much more of forest than now exists. Thousands and thousands were actually keeping themselves out of sight in coverts and fastnesses fitted by nature to be haunts of concealment or ambush. These could not be safely visited by strangers singly or in small numbers: and no measure was taken for exploration by parties numerous enough to be confident of safety. There was only one source of information—it will be spoken of in detail in the sequel—on which they could have relied; and this was closed to them, because they understood no language except their own.* Whatever causes may have hindered the knowledge of the numbers of the aborigines, it is very certain that they did not attain it even approximately; otherwise their leading men could not have been without information on a subject of so much importance. Yet of several of these who were invited at a later period (1852) to give evidence relating to local history, the greater part did not pretend to know or even to guess the number of Kafirs in 1838; whilst others gave statements of which the inaccuracy is at once obvious. No one who has lived long in the colony will fail to recognise as the names of men of acknowledged influence among the Boers, those of Evert Potgieter, J. G. Hatting, Abraham Spies, J. du Plessis, Christoffel Lotter, Dewald J. Pretorius, Caspar Labuscagne,

* For many generations the Boers had withdrawn themselves from civilization and instruction. A Dutch African clergyman (Rev. A. Faure) sent by the Cape Government in 1843 to confer with his countrymen, gives this account of the condition in which he found them:—"The ignorance of the emigrants is great indeed. The rising generation, following the example of their parents, is growing up more expert in the use of the gun than the knowledge of the alphabet. Their ignorance and credulity make them the dupes of every designing individual."—*Annals*—Part xviii-xix. Vol. ii., p. 361.

Salomon Maritz, Jacobus N. Boshof, Frederick Scheepers, and Jacobus F. van Staden. Of these the first eight were unable to make any statement. Of the last three Jacobus N. Boshof (since then for some years President of the Orange Free State) "had heard in 1838 that the number of natives was computed at 3,000." Jacobus F. v. Staden who arrived in 1841, "would say there were then about 3,000 or 4,000 natives." Frederick J. Scheepers, who came in 1838, was informed by the Rev. Dr. Adams that there were between 10,000 and 11,000. For some years a few missionaries from England and America had been in Natal, and were the only persons who had, or were likely to have, any knowledge of the circumstances of the people whom they sought to instruct and among whom they lived. The reference made by Mr. Scheepers to the head of the American Mission would have been a voucher for the accuracy of the number (between 10,000 and 11,000) of Kafirs in Natal in 1838. It so happens, however, that the same number is stated in the *Missionary Herald* of the period, and also in the Commissioner's despatches, as that of the natives, not in the whole area of Natal, but in a special locality, at or near a single mission station, under the Rev. Dr. Adams at the Umlazi River. Difficult, therefore, if not impossible, as any enumeration of the natives must have been to the emigrant Boers and to the few Europeans at the Port, it is plain that any estimate then made would almost certainly be inaccurate, and that the error would consist in reckoning too few. To rely in a momentous matter on a guess made at haphazard is always unwise, often unjust; yet upon an utterly baseless assumption of the number of Kafirs at that time in Natal, representations have been made to the Home Government which have, indeed, by singular good fortune not as yet been productive of gravely harmful results, but of which the want of wisdom may yet bear very bitter fruits.

When the Boers came in 1838, and still more when they had defeated Dingaan, the natives everywhere were inspired with the confidence that it was no longer absolutely unsafe to leave their hiding places in the country, or to return to it from any locality to which they had fled or been banished. They were known to be very numerous. In the

period between 1838 and 1843 the Boers had, though sparsely, occupied many of the large extents assigned to them by their Volksraad. They regarded the influx of natives with dislike and suspicion, and they had far better opportunities than in 1838 of estimating or counting their numbers. Evidence derived from several independent sources shows clearly that they were not far wrong in reckoning the Kafirs in 1843 at 80,000 or 100,000 souls. 

At this juncture, 1843, the duty devolved upon H.M. Commissioner, Mr. Cloete, of reporting the circumstances that were to guide the British Government in sanctioning the appropriation of land in Natal, whether by separate deeds of grant to those who understood the value of title deeds, or by locations for the use in common of natives who had no such knowledge. But with regard to the locations he drew a wide distinction between those to be set aside for intruders, of which the occupation was not to have any safeguard of fixity, and must depend in the future on the general interests of the country, and such as were to be inalienably vested in the chiefs of the *aboriginal* inhabitants. And in this definition of the difference of tenure there is nothing necessarily objectionable or unjust. Wrong could only arise from an error in determining who were the aboriginal, and who the intruding, tenants. The chief aim in Mr. Cloete's mission to Natal had been to win back to their allegiance and to conciliate his countrymen who had sought to withdraw themselves from British authority. It was only natural that, though himself very loyal, he should have many sympathies with the emigrants, and he readily acquiesced in their view that those only were to be regarded as aboriginal who had been known to be in the country in 1838; these he reckoned at first at 3000, but afterwards at 13,000. All others, more than 80,000 in 1844, were held, and were represented by him, to be intruders. This separate enumeration, involving the fundamental distinction in rights, was not only transmitted to H.M. Government by him as the Commissioner in 1843 and 1844, but adhered to at a later date, when he held the position of Recorder of Natal.

In a letter, 10th August, 1848, to Lieut. Governor West Mr. Cloete explains the grounds on which his count of ab-

originals had been founded. From "the best sources of information" available to him, he had learned in 1843 that the remnants of tribes in the district in 1838 were 3,000 in number; but in 1844, as the result of "further explorations," he found that that number represented only the population in the immediate vicinity of the bay of Natal and the coast, and that there were several petty tribes along the Drakensberg range that might be estimated at about 10,000; and he adds "that up to the time of his arrival in the country as Commissioner, 13,000 or 14,000 persons may be said to have been within this district entitled to be considered as aboriginal inhabitants."

- The very numerous and weighty matters in which the Commissioner was engaged left him little leisure for ascertaining the accuracy of numerical statements of which perhaps he did not foresee the grave future importance; and in one of his letters he mentions expressly that incessant occupation had stood in the way of his devoting much time to the subject. A fund of true information was indeed within his reach, but its value was unknown to him. It is evident from several of the Commissioner's writings that he made the acquaintance of the American missionaries, of whom he speaks with respect, and as to whose mission he suggests in no unfriendly spirit the measures to be taken for locating the natives under their influence. These missionaries had for some years periodically reported to their superiors in America many particulars respecting the Kafirs; and their reports were well deserving of credit, for they were made by men who had no political or personal purposes to serve, and had no interest in securing land for their fellow-countrymen, since Americans had no thought of emigrating to Africa. Several of the reports were made before it could have been known that any questions would arise as to the census and claims of the natives. Besides Captain Gardiner's narrative of "a journey to the Zulu country," and Isaac's travels, there was probably no printed volume in 1843-1844 that could throw a light on the circumstances of the district and its population except the "Missionary Herald." But Mr. Cloete was either too confident that he had already gained information sufficiently reliable, or he had not enough of respite from business for glancing at the

pages of the "Herald." He would otherwise have known that the missionaries had ascertained the fact—since established by patient and elaborate official enquiry—that the great majority of the population in 1844 were aboriginal natives. How unreliable Mr. Cloete's figures are, even as deduced from the sources in which he placed his trust will become manifest from a passing scrutiny.

Sir John Scott (Despatch, 26th February, 1864), adverts to the circumstance that, in confirmation of his first estimate of "two or three thousand aboriginals," the Commissioner cited Capt. Gardiner's narrative in which 2,500 are stated to have been the number of the Kafirs near the port in 1835. If Mr. Cloete had had time to peruse the volume a little more deliberately he would have learned in a subsequent page that Capt. Gardiner had found 3,000 natives at Zoutpan's drift on the Umkomanzi, and 5,000 inland on the Umgeni, 8,000 in all, belonging to a single tribe under a well known chief. These are omitted from the Commissioner's estimates both in 1843 and 1844; and it is the more to be regretted that he never noticed the passage containing the additional information, because it would have led him to reflect that as he had been twice misled, it was scarcely prudent to state with confidence any enumeration of those who were or were not aboriginals (even if his own arbitrary and unexplained postulate were adopted that those only were to be considered aboriginals who were in the district in 1838), and who alone therefore were in his view entitled to the privilege of a secure tenure of part—even a small part—of the land from which cruelty and wrong had driven them forth. If the emigrants from whom he derived his statistics had not any knowledge in 1843 of those recognized by him in 1844 as having been in the country in 1838, nor even at the later period knew any thing of the comparatively large number discovered by Capt. Gardiner, it was not only probable but reasonably certain that there must have been very many more of whom nothing was known to him, and who would be wrongfully excluded from fair recognition in measures essentially affecting their welfare.

The despatch already referred to (26th February, 1864), reveals another—and even more noticeable—oversight and omission in the Commissioner's figures. The Zulu kings

had forbidden the occupation of the country between the Itongati and Umzimvubu : there had been no such prohibition as to the considerable extent between the Itongati and the Tugela. This tract had from the date of the first cession to Retief been as much a part of Natal as it is at the present day. It was numerouslly inhabited ; but distrust, or the craving of the Boers to be the sole possessors of the country, suggested a stipulation in the treaty with Panda, 5th October, 1843, that he should withdraw "Kedoe, the captain of certain kraals, placed by the late king, Dingaan, on the right bank of the Tugela, and all other such captains or chiefs of kraals as may be found to come within the boundaries of the territory of Natal." And the despatch points out that Dingaan, having put to death some of the tribal chiefs in that locality, had placed captains of his own over the inhabitants. But whatever may have been the circumstances attending the removal of this part of the population in 1843, it is quite certain that they had been inhabitants of Natal in 1838, and were distinctly aboriginal, even in the narrow sense accepted by the Commissioner himself ; but they find no place in his enumeration of the aborigines. What was the number of those so excluded ? This can never been known ; but considering the area of the extent between the Tongati and the Tugela, there may easily have been ten or twenty thousand, or even more.

Besides these, beyond the sources of the Tongati and higher up along the course of the Tugela, there were great numbers whom Dr. Adams found early in 1839, and whose abode in the country is on record in his letter, 12th April, 1839, to the head of the Mission in America. He subsequently reckoned these to be as many as 16,000 (*M. Herald*, vol. 42, p.p. 191-192), and in any measure affecting interests that ought to be decided if not with liberality yet with ordinary fairness and probity, it may well be asked whether it is to be taken for granted that the natives found early in 1839 were not in the same locality in 1838.

It is therefore not a matter of speculation or argument but of absolute certainty that the natives in Natal in 1838 were at the lowest possible reckoning 21,000 ; but adding numbers that ought in reasonable probability to be accepted,

47,000 (*vide note*);* and if we consider the difficulty and danger of exploration at that time, and the concealment favoured by the nature of the country, and forced by caution on the wretched victims of wrong, it cannot but suggest itself that there must have been many more.

In despite, however, of errors that ought to have been obvious at once, and of others that have since been exposed, Mr. Cloete's enumeration of 13,000 has gained current belief, and has become in its turn the acceptable and accepted number; and to all who at any subsequent period have regarded the acquisition of the "locations" as the readiest means of favouring the immigration so much needed of additional colonists, or who have desired the extrusion of the Kafirs as facilitating a change in the mode of colonial administration, it has been easy to refer to the statements of Her Majesty's Commissioner as an all-sufficient reason for believing such a measure to be in no way unjust, since it would have no other significance than that of ridding the colony of the hurtful incubus of alien and unwelcome intruders.

As early as 1843, however, the number of natives in Natal had increased to nearly 100,000. The influx that thus increased the population had, as the Commissioner correctly states, taken place within the three or four preceding years; but except the 13,000, he considers them all to be "Zulu refugees," "deserters from Zululand," "foreigners," "aliens," and so forth. If he had known in any detail the history of the dispersion by Tshaka, it would have suggested itself to

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| NOTE.—Original number accepted by the Commissioner | 3,000 |
| Estimated numbers (in petty tribes settled along the Drakensberg range) added by the Commissioner as the result of "further explorations" in 1844 | 10,000 |
| Found at Zoutpan's drift, Unkomanzi, and on the Umgeni, inland, by Captain Gardiner, whose statement escaped the Commissioner's notice | 3,000 |
| | <hr/> 21,000 |
| Discovered by Dr. Adam's early in 1839, but almost certainly in the same locality in 1838 | 16,000 |
| Removed from the neighbourhood of the Tongati and Tugela, and at the lowest reasonable estimate | 10,000 |
| | <hr/> 47,000 |

him to be much more likely that the addition was made (as will be seen in the sequel) by exiles returning from the south-east and north-west. Supposing them, however, to have come, as some must have come, from Zululand, then why, if either they or their parents had lived within our limits before Tshaka's inroads, should they not be held to be aboriginals? Sir John Scott has observed with unanswerable logic: "it would be as correct to call Englishmen who have been resident in France, or any children born to them in that country, 'French refugees,' as to call the majority of the natives who then entered Natal 'Zulu refugees.'" But this second and even greater error of reckoning aboriginal inhabitants as aliens has found as much acceptance as the first, and has become equally a matter of general belief.

In initiating the project of assigning locations to the natives, the local government on 31st March, 1846, informed the gentlemen selected for reporting upon the subject that, "as the result of the inquiries made within the last three months, all the natives within this district, with the exception perhaps of an inconsiderable number of Zulus, properly so called, consist of the remnants of tribes which formerly inhabited not merely the present district of Natal, but a great extent of country to the east and west which had been at various periods within the last twenty-five or thirty years depopulated by the Zulus." It is to be regretted that the mode of enquiry and the evidence which led the Government to the conclusion thus announced were not published, and cannot now be traced among the official documents of the period; both might have been useful as a guidance for inquiry at a subsequent time. No evidence taken at any time as to the number of natives and the proportion that ought to be regarded as aboriginal is specially on record at an earlier date than 1852.

In 1852, the "Native Commission" was appointed. The consideration of the Commission was directed to many important subjects: the customs, the laws, the mode of future government of the natives: and on these the report is copious and bears witness to much patient labour: but only with one head of enquiry is it of present importance to deal, namely, that which relates to the aboriginal inhabit-

ants. On this the evidence varied greatly. Several of the witnesses, as has been noticed in a preceding page, stated their belief that the natives found in Natal in 1838—and who by reason of that circumstance were alone to be regarded as aboriginal—were 3,000, 4,000, or 10,000. Mr. Cloete, the Recorder of Natal (H.M. Commissioner in 1843), adhered to his former enumeration of 13,000 or 14,000. The Rev. Lewis Grout claimed aboriginal rights for a population varying from 75,000 to 83,000. The Diplomatic Agent, afterwards for many years the Secretary for Native Affairs, reckoned the aborigines in 1852 to be 41,500, and those who, having left the district and returned to it, were also aboriginals, but not in the same strict sense as others who had never quitted it, to be 24,000. In addition to these there were a considerable number, whom he regarded as being distinctly refugees, having come into the district for the first time when they sought protection and safety in a British settlement.

Except in reference to one of the witnesses, the report of the Commission does not give any particulars as to the reasons that weighed with them in accepting part of the evidence and dismissing the rest: but as they assumed without any apparent hesitation the exact numbers given by Mr. Cloete, it is obvious that amidst doubts that may have beset them in the conflict of evidence the only resource that suggested itself to them was that of relying on the prestige of the recognized position and ability of a gentleman, who, it might well be assumed, in the discharge of the duties devolving on him, was more likely than others to have had the means of obtaining information. It can only have been this implicit reliance that led the Commission to set aside the statistics adduced by the diplomatic agent and Mr. H. Fynn, the former of whom derived his information from facts ascertained in his own department, that of Native Affairs. But patent facts and simple arithmetic have now shown that their confidence was misplaced. Mr. Cloete had failed to secure correct figures, and had moreover connected the meaning of "aboriginal" with the year 1838, in which the origin of the natives of this country is by no reasonable process to be found.

With regard, however, to one of the witnesses who gave

evidence at great length, and very circumstantially, not orally but in writing,—the Rev. Lewis Grout,—the commission deemed it right to note a reason for wholly disregarding his statements. He had vindicated aboriginal claims for a very large proportion of the coloured race. The Commission was bound to be on its guard against any sacrifice of interests on which they believed the welfare of the country to depend. The witness was a missionary, an earnest preacher, one of a vocation that occasionally leads its votaries to be zealots or enthusiasts. The Commission would have considered it a weakness if they had allowed themselves to be misled by a dreamer, and they express themselves strongly in his regard. “Such wild, random assertions” as his “are without foundation, and may be regarded as the offspring of a rash, unwise credulity, which in its eagerness to support a favourite theory has proved a great deal too much.” There was a disadvantage in the evidence not having been given verbally and under cross-examination. In either event the Commission would have known that they had before them a man of sterling common sense as well as earnestness. But his evidence was held to be so little entitled to notice that it was not even observed how often his statements were made, not in his own name only, but in that of the American mission: and he refers not unfrequently to the Rev. Mr. Lindley. Will any one who was resident here in the early period of the settlement venture to affirm that we have ever had amongst us a man of fairer fame or brighter intellect than the Rev. Mr. Lindley? But his name had fortuitously not found a place in the list of those who were to be called on to give evidence. The American missionaries, as before explained, had every opportunity of becoming acquainted with things relating to the natives among whom they lived, whom they taught, and for whose welfare they were concerned. When it became known that special privileges as to location were to be conceded to those who were aboriginal, and withheld from those who were not, it would, doubtless, to many appear probable that in any statement made here, or transmitted to the Cape, or to England, where influence might be brought to bear on measures for the benefit either of Kafirs, or of those who looked on the presence of the Kafirs as an

obstruction, there would be a tendency on the part of a missionary or of any one interested to exaggerate or minimise the number of aborigines. But with regard to a return furnished to the heads of the mission in *North America* in May, 1844, no such suspicion could, within the limits of reasonable probability, exist; and on that date Mr. Lindley had reported that there were 100,000 aborigines in Natal.

The title, however, of "Her Majesty's Commissioner" had its fascination. To the accepted number of 13,000 aboriginals a place was exclusively given by the Native Commission. Their report was published: it was soon in the hands of the colonists; and the belief that the bulk of the natives are aliens and intruders, and that any extent of the Crown lands allotted to them was so much of the soil wrongly withheld from European colonists was, if not then engendered, very materially fostered.

Ten years passed away, and then a Committee of the Legislative Council was appointed to consider the subject of documentary tribal titles to land to natives. Naturally the question of numbers arose; and they report:

Appendix: parag. 7.—"It appears that out of this population of 50,000 souls,* the number of those who may be called aborigines or more properly who may be considered to have aboriginal claims on government for land, from the fact of their having been found living in this country when taken possession of by the Crown, had been estimated by those who had the best means of knowing at from 13,000 to 14,000."

that is to say, the Committee in 1862 were satisfied to do, as the Native Commission had before done. They relied on the accuracy of the Commissioner's means of information: and adhered to his figures.

It was then that Sir John Scott, noticing how deeply error had taken root, felt a very just apprehension that if nothing were done to place the numbers and the rights of the Kafirs in a truer light, grave wrong would probably result; and he resolved to take such evidence as should set the vexed question for ever at rest. Little more than a generation had

* Erroneously assumed as the native population in 1843.

passed away since Tshaka had laid waste the country. Many natives then in their prime were still living, and several of these from each tribe were called on to relate the incidents of their flight and sufferings. In transmitting to the Secretary of State the result of his inquiry (Despatch, 26th February, 1864) he showed the absence of foundation for the strange assumptions of H.M. Commissioner in 1843, and of the mischance of the Native Commission in 1852, and of the Committee of the Legislative Council in 1862 in accepting the Commissioner's figures without any verification. Of the investigation instituted by himself, the result will be best given in his own words. It had been found:

Par. 32.—“1st. That the country now included within the limits of this colony was originally and within the lifetime of living witnesses, densely peopled by numerous and independent native tribes, each being under a patriarchal form of government.

“2nd. That there are now dwelling in Natal sixty-five tribes, each under its own chief, than whom, during a period of nearly twenty years, Her Majesty has not had more peaceable and obedient subjects, or a people, though classed as uncivilized, more grateful—speaking of my own experience of seven years—than they are for the benefits conferred on them by Her Majesty's rule.

“3rd. That of these sixty-five tribes forty-three are ancient tribes of the country, which never had any other home, so far as it is necessary for us to trace their history, than the country now forming this colony, except during the turmoil and disruption caused by the ambition and aggressive acts of the Zulu king, Tshaka.

“4th. That there are nine tribes composed of a mixed native people, but chiefly fragments of the ancient tribes of the country, and therefore possessed of the same rights in the soil as those above mentioned.

“5th. That there are seven tribes, not anciently dwellers within that portion of the country now included within the boundaries of the colony, but within what now forms the Zulu kingdom, but to which the right to the possession of land within the colony was granted by the terms under which Natal was annexed to the British Empire.

“Lastly. That there are six tribes which occupy an ex-

ceptional status as regards any claim they may have to the possession of land; but even these, if it were possible to trace minutely the rights of each individual composing the tribes could not be wholly excluded."

The despatch also points out (par. 31), that the conclusions thus arrived at are in very near accord with the evidence of the Rev. Lewis Grout and Mr. H. Fynn, given before the Native Commission, 1852. ✓

A research actuated by motives so disinterested and high-minded, and carried on with so much of ability and patient labour, might have been expected to attain its object and to put an end once for all to the illusion that the natives within our borders, excepting a comparatively small number, are aliens or foreigners. It has had no such effect, although no attempt has been made during a quarter of a century to disprove, or even to call in question, the facts on the arguments in the despatch. To what is the failure of its object to be ascribed?

An inquiry upon this point will reveal that it has been due to a combination of mishaps that must here be retraced with as little as possible of unnecessary detail.

Not long after the transmission of the Despatch to the Secretary of State, Sir John Scott, his term of office having expired, quitted Natal. It was not in his power to watch over the effect of his work. His successor remained in office but a few months: and the Despatch was sent to the Legislative Council by Actg.-Governor, Colonel Thomas, in July, 1865. It happened that in that year the financial depression of the colony was such that rigid economy was observed in very minute items of expenditure; and an inquirer would now be informed on the best authority that, the despatch and its enclosures being somewhat lengthy,* the cost of printing would have been a sensible charge on the revenue, and one which it was not considered expedient to incur. It was not ordered to be printed, and has never been published.

After the manuscript of the despatch had been completed in the Governor's office, a few copies, not more perhaps than ✓

* 73 pages of print.

a dozen, had been struck off in a private printing press; apparently for the use of members of the Executive Council, for a small proportion of the dozen may possibly still be found among records in the higher departments of the service. The single copy sent to the Legislative Council remains alone and unnoticed among its archives.

The despatch must also have formed part of papers presented to parliament by the Secretary for the colonies; and of these a few copies, usually not more than three or four, were annually sent to the colonial Governors; and then, one being retained in the Governor's office, the remainder would be distributed in other departments. Whether any of these containing the despatch can now be found is very doubtful.*

It may be taken for granted that if Sir John Scott had remained longer in the colony he would himself have borne the cost of publication rather than that his careful toil should be consigned to oblivion, and that an error that may easily conduce to calamitous results should not be pointed out.

The writer of these pages was himself a member of the Native Commission in 1852. He had come to the colony in 1846, and for some years his occupations had placed him in frequent intercourse with the Dutch-African (then almost the only European) inhabitants. He had heard many accounts of the inhumanity of the Zulus. He took it for granted—all around him said so—that the natives of Natal were all Zulus, a source of danger to the country, and of no utility in it. He came therefore to the first meetings of the Commission deeply imbued with most of the impressions that evidently clung to other members. But some of the evidence raised doubts in him. He was at that time temporarily in charge of a department which was in no way concerned with native affairs, and in which incessant occupation gave him no leisure to satisfy himself that he could either truthfully concur in or disavow the opinions and belief of most of the members of the Commission. He withdrew from it, took no part in the discussions, and had

* More than one patient search for them has failed.

no share in framing or signing the report. Subsequently he was for nearly twenty years the Magistrate of a Division in which the natives were very numerous. His intercourse whether with individuals or with the tribes was constant and frequent, and he could not fail to know, even intimately, the character, the feelings, and the motives of action, of the coloured race.* He never had the smallest reason to suspect that they had any bias in favour of the Zulus; and when they fought bravely and loyally under our flag against the Zulus in 1878-79, the absence of sympathy was made very conspicuous; a fact that well deserves not to be forgotten. Being promoted to a higher office, he casually found among official papers the despatch of 26th February, 1864, and read it for the first time, and with that recognition of its fairness and accuracy to which it is justly entitled. Having at a later period retired from the Civil Service, and being employed in the compilation of the "Annals of Natal," he found in the records of the past many incidents and particulars that confirmed, none that were at variance with, the facts and views set forth in the Despatch. From the moment that the document had come under his observation, he had taken it for granted that in the ordinary course of business it must have been printed and published; and he was more and more surprised to see statements in the press and in public proceedings that could not have been made, as they obviously were, with unhesitating confidence, if the Despatch had ever been read. The surprise induced search and inquiry, with the result of finding a few months ago that, whereas the report of the Native Commission (1852) had been published, and republished at the public expense (1879), had been easily accessible and read by many, and had erroneously guided general belief on a matter of great importance, the despatch that would have laid bare its crucial error had been set aside, unseen, and virtually unknown.

* Difference of language, and the circumstance that the intercourse between Europeans and Kafirs is almost wholly limited to the relation between master and servant, or to matters of bargain, stand in the way of the better instincts and habits of the latter being at all generally known or appreciated: whilst the vices of those who haunt the "slums" in our towns attract much notice and aversion.

The press, itself misled, continually revives and fosters the error in the minds of the greater number of its readers. One or two extracts from leading journals (many might be quoted) show this unmistakeably. Thus we have recently read that it ought to be borne in mind "that we are not legislating for the descendants of the original inhabitants of the country so much as for the descendants of refugees, who found in Natal, after its settlement by Europeans, that peace and security, which they could not find in their native lands." Again, elsewhere, in deprecation of any fixity of tenure in the native locations, which the Native Commission of 1852 and Sir John Scott alike have described as in nearly their whole extent, broken, rugged, inaccessible fastnesses, a leading article reminds the public that the colonists are to be deprived "of the best lands of a country to which the vast majority of natives, as aliens, have no claim whatever."*

No blame, however, can attach to the press, if they have been thus mistaken in their impressions; for from a much higher source, little more than a year ago, the same error, actually went forth in a recommendation that could not fail of being brought to the notice of the Secretary of State, viz. : that as an important measure of colonial policy the natives in Natal should be removed to Zululand; and those who ventured on this suggestion were apparently so wholly unconscious of the real position and history of the coloured population that they assumed that our Kafirs were all Zulus; that their removal would have no other significance than that of their "repatriation," and that it would be "voluntary."

It is true of course that the preponderance in number of the natives cannot but be regarded as a disadvantage; it has, in their incapacity for the franchise, been a hindrance to the measure, keenly desired by aspiring colonists, of Responsible Government. Their savage, untutored, condition, for which, however, they cannot be to blame, is also a disadvantage. It is true also that, if the lands now held by

* For the greater number of the young colonists have too much of occupation to find time for other reading than that of the daily papers; and thus the fiction as to the natives being aliens becomes ingrained and traditional.

them were granted to emigrants, the number of colonists would be increased, and thus advantage would accrue to the colony.

But in the balance of gain or loss there is an offset certainly entitled to some consideration.

In 1852, before the Native Commission the Recorder of Natal stated in evidence that he did not believe that the history of man afforded a parallel to the unprecedented security both of life and property which the Europeans had possessed during the last ten years. He added: "such has been the respect of the Kafir towards the white man that there is, I believe I may venture confidently to assert, not one single instance during the last ten years of murder or an attempt at murder on any white man within this district; not one single case of that nature has been brought before the District Court during the past seven years, nor have I even heard of one," and during the same period only two or three cases of theft had been brought for trial.

In 1864, Sir John Scott, as before quoted, informed the Home Government that for nearly twenty years Her Majesty had not had any subjects more peaceable and obedient than the natives in Natal, or more grateful for the benefits conferred on them by Her Majesty's rule.

And in 1888, with reference to the project then announced of removing the natives, the Secretary for Native Affairs dwelt upon the circumstance that peace had been undisturbed by them for forty years.

Would it be well to risk a change in such a state of things?

Yet it will be disturbed if the true position of the natives be not generally known and recognized by the Europeans. That, which would besound policy if the natives were aliens—their expulsion—will be urged again and again; and in some unpropitious hour will be acted on. It is scarcely necessary to point out that to no reasonable being could it for a moment have seemed likely that the Kafirs would of their own accord, and generally, "volunteer" to withdraw into Zululand. It has been suggested to them; and if they did not bluntly refuse, it is but another proof of their willing acceptance of the Queen's authority; for they knew full well that, though the offer might have emanated from those

who wished it to have all the soothing sound of "repatriation," it could have no other than the harsh and repulsive meaning of "re-*expatriation*." Learning, however, that their presence in the country is obnoxious to the white men, many have expressed their willingness to withdraw if a guarantee be given that they will have in Zululand the same high protection—that of the British Crown—which has hitherto been afforded to them in the colony. And well may they stipulate for this : for very certainly the population in Zululand, who—except where they have been extruded by the Boers—are occupying their own country, in which being a pastoral people they require large extents for their herds, will also resent the influx of "intruders," more especially of intruders by whom, in support of our troops, their fellows were routed and slain in 1879. The assurance of British protection in Zululand has not been, and probably will not be, given to our Kafirs ; and it will be well, therefore, that they should not hear too often of the desire for their exile. It does not require any special knowledge of their intuitions, it needs only a little reflection on the dictate of human nature, to foresee that the repetition of what must be hateful to them cannot but dispose them to brood over the misfortunes of a conquered people. Any increase of taxation or of rent, even any measure for their improvement, will be regarded by them as having the object of rendering their abode in the country unendurable, and forcing them to go beyond our borders. Nothing could tend more effectually to cancel the feuds that separate the tribes, and to give them a common feeling of oppressive wrong, It will foster the thought that their only chance of a safeguard will be in union among themselves. Gradually they will become at first surly, then mutinous, possibly rebellious. Even in the two first contingencies there would be much of disadvantage: the third would be far more serious. The rebellion of the natives would not indeed be so dangerous now as it would have been some years ago ; for now assistance would more speedily come to us from various quarters : the Kafirs would be shot down. But this might not happen, probably would not happen, until, considering the scattered position and relatively small number of the Europeans away from the towns, there had been so much of alarm and disturbance

as would inflict heavy, and by no means transient, injury on the Colony.

By one, who from accidental and exceptional circumstances has gained an insight into the history, the character, and the propensities of our native population, the attention of some of our leading journals has more than once recently been called to the misapprehension so long and lastingly prevalent amongst us ; but nothing has emanated from the press to stimulate inquiry. No option, therefore, was left, if the colonists were to be warned on a subject of great gravity, but to place before them a succinct summary of some occurrences in Natal during the last half-century that have a direct bearing on the welfare of the settlement. It was the more requisite that this should be done, because a larger and far more valuable source of information has, by a series of untoward mischances, become practically inaccessible. The despatch of 26th February, 1864, was written by Sir John Scott, when his connection with Natal was about to be severed ; and it is the more valuable on that account, since his views could not but be free from any misleading influence of personal interest or local ambition : he wrote with a high motive, temperately, clearly, ably, and in great detail ; and, moreover, with ample evidence in support of his important theme. On the acceptance of the truth for which he contended must depend the contentedness of the population ; and, therefore, the tranquillity and the peace of the colony.



Pittsburg,

Kans.

20th June, 1890

Dear Richard Sir,

My pamphlet - the
"Inquiry" &c - was sent to
you by the Rev. Mr. Wilder;
and I have reason to be
very much gratified that he
did so - for in the course of
a long life I have seldom,
I may truly say, had a more
welcome letter than yours.

I thank you for it very
sincerely. It brought back
the past - almost my young
days - very vividly. I do not
remember that I ever made
your acquaintance personally;

but your name was very familiar to me; for you bore an integral part in our early history. I often met the Rev. Mr. Lindley, and there was a very good feeling between us; and through him I was led to respect the American Mission, and to recognize the worth of its missionaries.

I should have acknowledged your letter immediately after its receipt, but I delayed - because after an interval of more than three months ^{the "Inquiring"} ~~it~~ was false criticized by the press and by one or two writers who had it at heart to deny the truth: viz: that the

great majority of the natives in Natal are the descendants of those who were driven out by Isheeka, and who returned to it. I have waited till my replies to the criticisms came to a close: - and in a separate packet I enclose copies of those, which may possibly also interest you.

Mr. Commissioner Cloose (1843) erred abominably in his estimate of the numbers of the aborigines. The "native Commission" in 1852 accepted his figures. Their report was published; and the belief gained ground among the Europeans that all our Kafirs are aliens except a very

small number. The Legislation Council in 1862 accepted the mistake, as the Commission of 1852 had done. Then Sir John Scott made an exhaustive inquiry, and proved that five-sixths of the native inhabitants are aboriginal. His despatch was sent to the Legislative Council in 1865. In the ordinary course of the receipt of such documents, they are printed and published by the Council. I, who knew the contents of the despatches well, had taken it for granted that it had been published - nearly a quarter of a century ago. It was difficult

for me to understand how
 the error as to the above-
 givers could continue to
 prevail in the words of
 the colonists, in the columns
 of the press, even in the
 debates of the council. Last
 year — almost accidentally
 — I found that the despatches
 had never been printed or
 published by the Council.
 Such a suppression of
 truth is almost astounding;
 but it has been successful.
 I wrote the "Inquiry" in
 the hope of gaining a recog-
 nition of the truth. But
 the colonists like to cling
 to the ^{belief that the} nations are aliens
 and intruders; — that they

wrong
 may without ~~injurious~~ be
 driven out of the country;
 and that their locations may
 without injurious become
 the property of additional
 emigrants from Europe. I
 believe I must fail in
 my object.

But the effort I have
 made has obtained for me
 the expression of ^{the} friendly
 sympathy of one of whose
 worth I am very confident.
 and I thank you again
 very heartily for your
 letter, and for the appro-
 bation you have so warmly
 expressed of my attempt to
 vindicate a good and just

cause, -

Believe me,

Dear Reverend Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

W. Bird.

